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## Pictures of children up for adoption on display at City Hall

By FRAN MORALES

NEW BRITAIN — Like any ordinary boy, Travis is the outdoorsy type who loves nature and loves Harry Potter books.

The 14-year-old's photograph represents many faces of Connecticut children in need of permanent and loving homes. Travis is one of 32 children portrayed in the Heart Gallery exhibit, which opened at City Hall Wednesday.

The Heart Gallery exhibit, sponsored by state Department of Children and Families, raises awareness through photographs of children who are available and waiting to be adopted. Adoptive parents, city officials and Mayor Timothy Stewart came to support the gallery's cause.



The professional photos of children in state care are displayed with personal essays written by the children.

"The Heart Gallery's message is of hope," Miskunas said. "Look at these faces — every single child that is [portrayed] here wants a home. They are willing to put themselves out there, in hopes a family will notice and become interested in them and adopt them."

About 30 to 40 percent of the children photographed through Heart Gallery have been adopted, according to Karen Miskunas, DCF program supervisor. The state agency completes 500 adoptions a year, and there are 50 children in state care who are ready to be adopted, she said.

"You don't have to go overseas to adopt," said Anne Marie Stonoha, social work supervisor for DCF. "There are children in our backyard who need permanent and loving families."

The Heart Gallery has grown since its inception in New Mexico in 2001. In the last six years, the effort has branched out to 45 states, including Connecticut's DCF, where it was introduced in 2003.

For more information, contact the DCF at (800) 842-6347. The gallery is open through Feb. 22. Fran Morales can be reached at [fmorales@newbritainherald.com](mailto:fmorales@newbritainherald.com) or by calling (860) 225-4601, ext. 306.